



CIVIL AIR PATROL CALIFORNIA WING
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HEADQUARTERS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30 May 2003

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Civil Air Patrol Conducts Ongoing Search for Missing Aircraft

Intense Search Continues from Northern California Coastline to Sacramento Valley

(Ukiah Muni Airport, Ukiah, CA) – May 30, 2003 – Civil Air Patrol (CAP) aircraft and flight crews continue to converge on Ukiah Muni airport, from as far South as Bakersfield, through Northern California in search of a missing single-engine aircraft and pilot Randolph Hietala, 61 years of age. The blue and white Cessna 172, tail number N7555X departed from Little River airport at approximately 10:30 PM, May 25th, enroute to Nevada County airpark near Grass Valley, California.

The CAP was launched into action late Monday afternoon when notice was given by family members that the Cessna, and its pilot were overdue and had not been seen or heard from since its departure from Little River airport, which is along the Northern coast of California, or at the anticipated destination of Grass Valley.

Due to very limited radar coverage in the local region, the last known position of the aircraft was indicated as over the coastline, headed northwest. The search for this aircraft is made even more difficult by the fact that no Emergency Location Transmitter (ELT) signal is being received, offering no homing device for the aircrews to track. Therefore, the CAP aircraft are committed

to visual only grid searches, between the coast and the Sacramento Valley. The Coast Guard initially flew a search of the coast line. Mountainous terrain with dense shrub and forest also contribute to the difficulty of the mission, requiring intense scrutiny of the most probable flight path.

To date, approximately twenty CAP aircraft, and more than sixty CAP aircrew and mission base members involvement have contributed to almost one hundred hours of air-search time.

The CAP search mission continues on Friday with eight aircraft, and aircrew of at least twenty-four, while the entire California Wing of the Civil Air Patrol remains on alert to provide aircraft, aircrews and ground search teams for this mission, for as long as is needed. Plans are currently in place to open a fully staffed mission base at the Ukiah airport through the weekend if needed.

Anyone who might have seen this airplane after take off, or has any information regarding low flying, or sounds of troubled aircraft around the Little River airport along the Northern coast of California, or along its path in the Sacramento Valley to its destination of Grass Valley, during the late evening of Sunday, May 25th are asked to call the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office at 707.463-4086.

Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the official Auxiliary of the United States Air Force, is a nonprofit organization of approximately 64,000 members nationwide with approximately 4,000 members in California. It performs more than 95% of inland search and rescue missions in the continental United States as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. CAP volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Most recently, CAP members flew security over the launch site of the space shuttle Columbia and later assisted in the Columbia shuttle recovery. In the days after 9/11, Northern California members flew blood products for the Red Cross when all commercial aviation was grounded. California alone had over 55 crews standing ready to be called into action. The CAP volunteers also take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to almost 27,000 of America's youth through the CAP Cadet Program.

For additional information and follow-up, please contact Candice Tuttle, 2Lt, CAP Mission Information Officer; Hm Tel: 650.326.5214, Cell: 650.465.9487, Email: Candice@LadyPIC.com .

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